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28 Dec 1918

Arlecham,

Saturday.

Dearest,

Owing to this beastly weather I have had to yield to Leonard & not come this morning, much against my will. I'm fearfully cross & disappointed, especially as the wind seems to be going down now – but I shall try to come tomorrow anyhow, about 12·30. & stay to luncheon. You can't imagine how excited I was to hear of my niece – in fact I think even you would have been touched to know how completely my pleasure here was spoilt until I heard it was over. I see I'm going to become a perfectly sentimental

old Aunt (I'm dropping into
Aunt Mary's language already)
about her. She must be the
most adorable little creature.
But I want most to know how you
are – whether sensible, ruminative,
tender, peaceful & sublime.
Perhaps Leonard will bring me some
news. I should only bore you if I
went on saying be careful.
La & Will are not coming,
so it's easier than ever to have the
children, & the servants are
enraptured. It is just possible
that Nelly is in touch with two
friends who might come to you –
but I'll tell you all about it
tomorrow.

Clarissa.
Miriam.
Rachel
Venetia
Sabine.

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Clara.
Sarah.
Sara
Euphrosyne.

I think on the whole I prefer Clarissa
but I know there's a better one on the
verge of my brain which I can't
remember.

O damn! how I wish I were
with you & had disregarded my
husband flatly. It's not going to
rain after all, & I said it wasn't.

A thousand embraces in all
the tenderest parts from your Apes.

Has Clarissa got a lovely little
down at the back of her neck. Mark
Let all be allowed to kiss her?

VB.

Dec 31
1918

Athelhampton,

Tuesday,

Dearest,

The most disappointing that I shan't see you a Anonyma before we go, but we're now settled to go tomorrow, & I'm afraid I shan't be able to come over today. The children are both perfectly well, & more angelic than words can say. Lottie however has surpassed herself. She has got into such a state about her own health that she makes life here impossible & it seems best to go back where at any rate we are near doctors & chemists. If it weren't so irritating it would really be very amusing. After waking us up to say she was dying, she said next day that she felt perfectly well. However, when night came she again got into a panic. Though her only symptoms were that her feet were very cold & her head was very hot. She said of course that she was in a raging fever; we could not take her temperature as the tube was broken. Happily I had an old sleeping draught which we gave her, & she went to sleep again at once. Next day she said she was certain she was very ill indeed, & must see a doctor. It was Sunday, & finally she agreed that if we got a temperature tube & found that she was normal she would be content. So we sent Will off to Lewes: to ring up a chemist, but the chemist was sold out of temperature tubes. Then I gave her a talking to, & said there was nothing whatever the matter with her, & she ought to be ashamed of herself. This had some effect, & we got through the night without being called. Yesterday morning she was worse than ever, & accused me of being heartless, & insisted upon seeing a doctor at once. Just as the Nelly were starting, it came on to rain, & she decided to stay at home, & let Nelly

go & find another chemist & bring back a thermometer. Nelly came back saying that there was not such a thing in Lewes. Leonard finally went to the Killicks & borrowed one. We took her temperature & found it to be normal. We took it at night & found it to be normal. She then said that although she hadn't any fever, she was very ill internally. Her symptoms were impossible to describe, but such that she only wished she could die. Nelly, who has been having this for the last fortnight began to get rather hysterical alternately scolding Lottie & abusing me, & finally the only chance of peace seemed to be to say that we would return to Richmond & have Fergusson. Lottie refuses to go to bed, & altogether Nelly did most of the work, & altogether I expect we shall be better off at Hogarth. However, as I say, the children are perfectly well & no trouble at all. They play in the drawing room most of the morning, & we go for a walk after luncheon. & they seem to be full of their own games & ideas, which fit in very nicely well with mine. They are amazingly interesting as well as attractive. Julian of course, knows infinitely more about science & history & geography than I do. He & Leonard had an argument yesterday about what would happen if you put a barometer into deep water. Leonard was very much impressed by his intelligence, as it is, I see, getting to be very fond of them. Quentin's mind is very like mine, I expect. I hear him telling hourly stories about Lady Suffolk, & how she will only eat chickens which she breeds in enormous numbers, & she is the richest woman in the world & a Peeress in her own right. How they get hold of all this language I don't know; it seems to me very superior — in fact their minds altogether seem much quicker & more intelligent than ours. Mrs. B. must have trained them very well to do what they are told. Their great delight is to pretend to be dolphins in the bath, but they get out the moment I tell them to seriously. & their table manners are perfect. They seem to have most economical minds. Quentin told me the first night "I think this an unnecessary expense for you to have bolsters in your bed", & Julian said "You seem to me to be very extravagant with

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your coal." Quentin would only put a scraping of strawberry jam on his bread, because he said that it was very precious in war time. However their appetites are very good, — they have just been in to day with I ask you to send them King Solomon's Mines, & Quentin's ≠ black book, as he wants to do some writing. You are not to send Adrian's book as Julian has finished it. Lord! what a mercy they are to talk to after the servants! Leonard has gone up to London to day, & it makes all the difference having the children to play with, so that I needn't discuss Lottie heartily with her. As to your servants I will find out more when things have quieted down a little. What Nelly said was that she had seen Lil (her niece, I think) who is either leaving or has left a place, & asked her whether she would come to you as nurse. Lil has not been a nurse, but is very fond of children. She said she did not want to live in the country; but perhaps this could be overcome, if you thought she'd do. But Budge sounded more hopeful. She is Nelly's sister, & has been a general for years. She is now in munition works, but thinks they will soon be dismissed, & then wants a place, & would go as housemaid parlourmaid. She wants to stay until they have to go, as she is forewoman. But she is a first rate servant according to Nelly, a very nice. It might be worth while to write & explain about your place, so that she could think it over before she heard of anything else. I know the way seven years & in her last place before the war. Emily sounds appalling — but in a different way I expect Lottie is just as bad. In fact I am on a more seriously considering whether it is worth while to go on like this. This is the third time she has completely spoilt Atcham for us. It was perfect with Mr. Hammond alone. If she has everything her own way at Richmond she is all right, but even if she is very bad at most other work, I do get more & more to detest having servants living in the house. However, I shall see what happens — the difficulty is that Nelly is very good a very nice, a decent it mayn't

be possible to run a house with dailies. At the same time, I'm sure now it could be worked, & I always believe that it would be a perfect arrangement if you had them both, as the source of Lottie's temper is I'm certain that she hasn't enough to do, & you could start giving lessons with her, as I ought to have done. This is only a vague idea on my part, of course.

The children are now having a very polite correspondence with Mr. Gunn. It is said that he has broken off his engagement. Now is a list of the things we are going to do.

Zoo.
Movies.
Tea at the Omega (Quentin says if we do this he must write a thank Rogers)
Pantomime
Russian Dancers.
Richmond Park
Sliding Staircase on the Tube.
British Museum.
Tea at Buzzards.

But the thing Julian wants to do almost most of all is to learn the Greek alphabet! & I shall teach him that, & they are also very anxious to write ways & stories for me to judge, so we shall be very literary. & I hope to persuade Quentin to be a writer & not a painter when he grows up.

What an enormous long letter! — & now I must answer Aunt Annys. I daresay it's better for you not to see me but I'm very cross & disappointed — I'd meant to come tomorrow — it's another reason for cursing Lottie. Please ask Duncan to write as often as he can & tell me how you are. & describe the ways of the adorable little creature. It is an enormous pleasure to me that she is a daughter. Think what an interest all her ways will be — much more than a boys — though I admit there's a good deal to be said for the firstborn (by which I mean of course, Darling B.

You'd better destroy this, in care of Emily.

VYPL
HAMNET 12/29/69

I've just had Sotheby's Catalogue. Shall want to know what reserve to put; it any. I'm putting them to just a reserve of £100 on

the Vanity Fair Hogarth, 200 gns cigars? last

Nine on The Merchant

Mrs S.

98

Monday,

Dearest,

I'm very glad the operation is over. It sounds rather horrid. I daresay you'd be surprised to know how often I thought of you & the Brats on Saturday. The whole of the Stores would only produce one box of chocolates; it's a most desolate sight. I hope Julian may be sufficiently well to eat them. I'm also sending Bagnold & Nevinson, though it strikes me that even you can't be hard up for books at Durbins.

I wish I had any gossip to tell you. I've just come in from tea at the Club. When I talked to Rosemary Maitland. She is a stout handsome woman & about thirty, motherly & yet risqué, to me rather a contemptuous type, after our cropheads & their dauntless ways. She keeps a farm, & breeds prize oxen, which

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98

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I wish I had any gossip to tell you. I've just come in from tea at the Club. When I talked to Romeyard Maitland. She is a stout handsome woman of about thirty, rather a cantankerous type, after our Cropheads & their dauntless ways. She keeps a farm, & breeds prize oxen, which

the way is far the most interesting of country pursuits. You never know what sort of calf you're going to get, & you go round the markets & try to judge the best sire to mate with your cow.

"Well then, what do you do in the Evenings?" I said.

"I play the double bass. It is an enormous instrument, the largest of all, & it plays an octave below the cello, so that it the foundation of the whole orchestra — I also write children's stories — improper ones."

"But, my dear Ermengard, you're just become a Quaker —

"Well, I knew that. But I told them I meant to write improper stories — & they're not improper in your sense. However the wouldn't tell me in what sense they were improper. I think it rather a marvellous conception, to breed bulls & write improper stories & be a Quaker. The thoves are off tomorrow to try & get work on a farm in Hertfordshire. But I can't

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describe to you what an agony this afternoon was to me. You know the horror of buying clothes, especially for one forced as I am to keep my underclothes pinned together by brooches. However things have come to a pass; so I flung myself into a shop in Holborn. I should certainly always paint shops with lots of looking glasses & boxes bursting with white frills, & all the young ladies powdered & painted, & their hair scraped tight back, & one enormous jewess in black satin issuing solemnly from a wardrobe. The impropriety seemed to me beyond anything we know. So it went on. I tried shop after shop; & then in a perfectly random way went & bought a navy-coloured black striped coat or dress, for £6.10 ! in Leicester Sqre Good Heavens! What a world we live in! The pressure of solid matter never seems sufficient to keep one altogether straight. I've been writing about you all the morning, & have made you wear a blue dress; you've got to be immensely my heroine a romantic.

which of course you are; yes, but it's the Cambridgeism that's so exhilarating; to crack through the paving stone & be enveloped in the mist. You must admit that that puts the matter in a nutshell. However I must stop, though I believe I like writing to you better than seeing you — I mean, when we meet at Gaden Sq^re, the lyric mood has to be suppressed. But have you got a servant? Nelly says Drewett in the High St. is very good indeed. And Aunt Minna has suddenly emerged, asking us to lunch, & wishing particularly for news of Venetia, & is she in London? She asks us to meet "the Orchardleigh children" "who on earth can they be? The days of childbearing for Edith & Amy must be over, & without result, so I've always thought.

Please send me another line about the children. If a word of love for the Apes were thrown in — they were exceptional the other day to find themselves one rung higher on the ladder than Roger. You did say so: you can't deny it. Don't get overtired.

Yr B.

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HAMILL 6/1/66

which of course you are; yes, but it's the combination that's so enthralling; to crack through the paring string & be enveloped in the mist. You must admit that that puts the matter in a nutshell. However I must stop, though I believe I like writing to you better than seeing you — I mean, when we meet at Gaden Sq^re, the lyric mood has to be suppressed. But have you got a servant? Nelly says Drewett in the High St. is very good indeed. And Aunt Minna has suddenly emerged, asking us to lunch, & wishing particularly for news of Venetia, & is she in London? She asks us to meet "the Orchardleigh children" "who on earth can they be?" The days of childbearing for Edith & Amy must be over, & without result, so I've always thought.

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Ly B.

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HAMILL 6/1/66

Abbeys Agency have rung up to know if
Gwen's taken Mrs Paton. Will you write
straight to them 2. Someone else wants her.
Hogarth. How is the
baby?

1905

Monday.

Dearest,

Nelly has just been in to me to suggest that she should come to you for a fortnight when Tottie has her holiday. This is entirely her own suggestion, & she is writing to you herself. I don't know if you have made other arrangements; but we can manage all right, as Lottie has offered to do for us, so do have her if it's any use. Only neither Leonard or I will take any responsibility! Would the last 2 weeks in July suit you? Then she could come on straight to Athelhampton —

I wash my hands of the whole horror. (I believe my character was damaged by Trissie, but nothing else suffered) — Poor old Leonard never for an instance tried to prevent them from going on July 1st; he always encouraged it — & I had only one

moment of panic after Trinie had gone,
When I thought she'd persuaded them to
leave us anyhow, & didn't know if I
could get anyone. But 4 daily women
turned up the day after, without any effort
on my part. However, this is my
Swan Song; I am now mute for ever.
The only disaster that I still have to face
is that my letters are evidently read
by Trinie. She quoted a sentence from
one of them, which makes me shiver
slightly — I could of course write
a truthful & highly unpleasant account
of her soul as it was revealed to me
in flashes of lightening the other day; but
then there are other things to talk about.
I don't want to devote my entire life to
Trinie. What am I to do?

I try to get away from them
servants but I can't — Karins couple
have given notice, as the grooved
that they are had to wash Ann's
tea cup. & African has appealed
to Sophie: they hope to get her for ever
& ever. That was in my head for you —
not that you should pension her. I've

had a letter from Gerald, which I enclose. Isn't it superb to see how the Duckworthes settle down like blue bottles directly anyone's dead upon the will? I had a most interesting talk with Waller, at Rays party, which I should like to describe, but the small leaden eyes of Trixie are fixed upon this page. Isn't it wretched? However he was inconceivably like my memory of him — holding forth upon education, & very nice & affectionate. & I laughed at him all the time, & he told me how he'd had a row with George at the Munitions office. George was incredibly stupid, & then Margaret sent for him & told him "he must'nt hurt dear George's feelings — You say Vanessa has decided against the public school for her boys. Well, my dear, its a gamble, yes, its a gamble. The public school is far from perfect. But its the intellectual stimulus & companionship that one gets there. Yes, Eton did more for me than Balliol; but I suffered all my life from having no sisters. I never knew the woman's side of life until I met your family. All boys ought to know that. Now,

take the care of my nephews; both of them killed
now. They changed at Harrow; they
changed for the worse. But you &
Nessa are both of you confirmed gamblers.
Well, so am I. I've never been able to
conform, my dear Ginia; that's what the
matter with me. I'm not in the
hierarchy. I shall never be in the
Government. No, I've gambled, & I've
known away the game. Still I
find life get more & more interesting —
& I'm horrified at my age. Why, I'm
51; yes. I want you & Nessa to laugh at me,
but I still find me & two people who
don't take me seriously, thank God."
He was extraordinarily nice; he seems
to have lost a great many teeth; he is
coming to Dmi with us. The
parrokeets have invited themselves for
Wednesday, which makes me rather
nervous. Gravy has made me 2
dresses. She's infinitely better than ayone
save Mrs Young, I think. I'm sending
my story; you will see that's it's a case
of atmosphere, & I don't think I've got it
quite. Don't you think you might design a
title page? Tell me what you think of the
story. I'm going to write an account of my
emotions towards one of your pictures,

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which gives me infinite pleasure, & has changed
my views upon aesthetics; & I'm now so
lacerated by my chair covers & the carpet
that I've got to take steps – I can hardly
sit in the drawing room – but all this is
very complicated, & I must write a special
letter about it. It's a question of half
developed aesthetic emotions, constantly
checked by others of a literary nature – in
fact it's all very interesting & intense.
Jacques Raverat has revived the art of
Ary Scheffer. Dr. May used to like his
picture of Christ so much. Stone coloured
smooth literary & yet falsely artistic pictures-

pictures ashamed of being literary, & yet
crammed with suggestions of character &
sublimity in every line: . But what a
show! The drowsy stupidity of the
painter's point of view appalled me.
There was a picture of Theatre that I
liked; but I thought a John drawing
knocked everything else out. There was
a Robert a uncompromising Rothenstein—
protesting his few simple emotions.
I'm writing in a hurry, & I mustn't
do injustice to my aesthetic philosophy.
How are you? B.

NYPL

HAMLEN 6/1/66

Hogarth - Thursday

Dearest,

There are so many different matters to go into that I think I'd better address you in the form of a newspaper. In the first place,

Domestic Quarrels.

The situation is much more calmer. I daresay Lytton's account of Mary was rather highly coloured. I got the impression that she was conveyed about London in taxi cabs in a fainting condition, only occasionally to execrate me & then burst into tears, flinging herself into Clive's arms, ground on the floor at your feet, denounce us all for traitors & vipers, so that finally Lytton (with the insignificant exception of V. W.) adored. Naturally, himself had to be invoked to assure her that she was universally I contrasted this with my own resplendent courage under far worse persecution; & you enduring spite & malevolences innumerable with the stoicism of Cleopatra's needle. I said to myself (everything in future is to be said to myself) that if Mary plays games she ought to mind burning candles; the truth is that these young people rush into situations which they can't carry out. The only solution for Mary seems to me divorce: otherwise she must spend the rest of her life in the swamp with these stinging but semi-aquatic reptiles. But I must also clear my reputation for common sense. Carrington had warned me about Gerbler as well as you; so that my position was guarded in the extreme. If you could have heard my fulsome praises of Otoline — how I picked my way whenever Mary was mentioned with the foresight of an elephant — moreover, & apt to you I never

find fault with Mary, & the utmost I've ever said about her was that she was sleeping in a forest with the Cockatoo's singing to her sweetest in the moonlight — purely visionary remarks, since to me she is little more (at present, & I suppose forever) than a highly sympathetic Shade. Molly seems to have struck up a friendship with her.

Practical Affairs.

I have sent you a parcel of eatables, which they say, will be at Glynde station ~~tomorrow~~ on Saturday morning without fail. They wouldn't go by post, so they had to go by train. I chose them rather at random, so please tell me which turns out best. & please eat some of them yourself.

Wood Cuts.

I enclose a proof — not nearly black enough, but we only had our hand machine. If you can't see the details, I will get a better one done on the printers machine. We should be very glad of another, if you would do one; but it ought to be small — about half the size of this. I think it will be a great success — owing to you: & my writing comes out much as I had it, so I suppose, in spite of everything, God made our brains on upon the same lines, only leaving out 2 or 3 pieces in mine.

Art. Gossip. Friendship &c. &c. &c.

I've got any amount to say, having been to the Omega twice, the National Gallery once; having gone to tea with Katherine Mansfield with Ka & Will, & promised to go to tea with Nelly Cecil, & having some compliments for you, as well as a profoundly interesting theory about Duncan's painting: to a there's Miss Sichel too — I could write pages about her — but I've been seized by toothache, & I must now rush off to the dentist, & I can't do my ideas justice. Please tell me how you are.

Embrace Duncan. Yr B.

Am I to write to Mary?

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